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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Letter dated 29 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the following in connection with the letters from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General dated 20 February, 6 March and 15 March 2018 (A/72/757-S/2018/150, A/72/780-S/2018/200 and A/72/788-S/2018/227).

The aforementioned letters and their annexes, which are false in substance and inappropriate in tone, once again demonstrate Yerevan's irresponsible and provocative policy aimed at misleading the international community and destabilizing the situation on the ground.

The letters are also flawed and unacceptable because they pass over the well-documented facts in silence. In reality, it was Armenia that resorted to force and violence in an attempt to realize its groundless and illegal territorial claims. Since the very first day of the conflict, combat operations have been conducted exclusively inside the territory of Azerbaijan, almost in the middle of the country, affecting its civilian population and infrastructure; and it is Armenia that continues to occupy the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding seven districts of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in gross violation of international law and Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993).

Above all, what can be the weight of all the allegations by Armenia if its highest political and military leadership bear personal responsibility for the aggression and massacres committed by their armed forces during the conflict? Suffice it to recall that the territories of Azerbaijan were seized and ethnically cleansed of their entire Azerbaijani population when two successive Presidents of Armenia, Robert Kocharian and Serzh Sargsyan, led the illegal armed groups that were directly engaged in atrocities in the territory of Azerbaijan.

Indeed, committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, glorifying war criminals and international terrorists, promoting dubious ethno-religious ideology

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and raising territorial claims against its neighbours have become a sort of "norm" of conduct for Armenia.

We resolutely reject Armenia's attempts to distort and falsify the truth with regard to the massacre of the Azerbaijani civilian population of Khojaly in February 1992. There are more than sufficient facts and proof which refute Yerevan's vile and nefarious fabrications, and these have repeatedly been brought to the attention of the international community (see, e.g., A/71/782-S/2017/110 and A/72/753-S/2018/129).

In addition to the considerable information in possession of the law enforcement agencies of Azerbaijan, the responsibility of Armenia and its political and military leadership for the crimes committed in Khojaly and elsewhere in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is recognized and documented by numerous independent sources, consisting of the testimonies of witnesses to the tragedy, statements by authoritative international institutions and the findings of independent investigations by foreign journalists, human rights activists and authoritative international non-governmental organizations, as well as the public statements by Armenia's high-ranking officials.

Nothing can erase the horrors of the tragedy in Khojaly and release the perpetrators of the heinous crimes committed during Armenia's aggression from accountability. Such accountability is not only about the past, but is also about the future; it constitutes a critical component of prevention, and also an important step on the path to long-lasting reconciliation. It is important that the international community think about what happened in Khojaly and in other cities, towns and villages of Azerbaijan that were seized and devastated by Armenia and unequivocally reject the denial by Yerevan of its responsibility for waging war and committing the most serious international crimes.

We have repeatedly stated, and I want to stress again, that Armenia's annexationist policy has no chance of succeeding. It must drop its futile attempts to mislead its own people and the wider international community, engage constructively in the conflict settlement process and comply with its international obligations.

The military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia. In accordance with international law and the aforementioned Security Council resolutions, the primary objective of the ongoing peace process is to ensure the immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the realization by the forcibly displaced population of their inalienable right of return to their homes and properties.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative